

RELEASED IN FULL

INFO	LOG-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DNI-00	DODE-00
	DOTE-00	DS-00	EB-00	FAAE-00	FBIE-00	UTED-00	VCJ-00
	H-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	L-00	VCIE-00	NSAE-00	ISN-00
	NIMA-00	EPAU-00	ISNE-00	DOHS-00	SP-00	IRM-00	SSO-00
	SS-00	NCTC-00	FMP-00	EPAE-00	SHEM-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00
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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PREL, PINR, MX

SUBJECT: PRD PROTEST TURNS VIOLENT

REF: A. A. MEXICO 4292

B. B. MEXICO 4490

C. C. MEXICO 4311

(U) 1. Summary: After a series of "peaceful resistance" demonstrations by AMLO supporters that began on July 31 (see reftels), protesters had their first violent clash with law enforcement authorities outside Congress on August 14. The violence was sparked when PRD protesters tried to prevent the Federal Preventive Police (PFP) from removing three vehicles they had parked so as to block an entrance to the Congress. The protesters allegedly threw sticks, stones and bottles at the PFP, who responded by firing tear gas at the protesters. A PRD spokesman reported injuries to eight deputies, two senators, and four elected city officials. The PFP later released a bulletin stating that its forces had followed standard procedure for when an assembly fails to disperse as ordered. On August 15, protesters briefly blocked entrance to the Spanish Embassy. End Summary.

AMLO,s One-Month Plan Of Civil Disobedience

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2. (U) At his August 13 "informational assembly" in the Zocalo, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) laid out a one-month schedule of civil disobedience activities, which included (1) continued occupation of the Zocalo and the main avenue Paseo de la Reforma, (2) a protest outside Congress during President Fox's final annual report to Congress on September 1, (3) a protest on the day that the electoral tribunal (TEPJF) delivers a certificate of victory to Felipe Calderon, (4) a separate Mexican Independence "grito" celebration in the Zocalo on September 15, and (5) a convention of AMLO supporters to be held in the Zocalo on September 16, "to define the role (AMLO supporters) will assume in Mexican public life." The latter potentially would conflict with the Mexican military's traditional September 16 parade in the Zocalo.

3. (U) Apparently in accord with AMLO's schedule of mass actions, protesters began "setting up camp" outside the Mexico's lower house of Congress, on August 14. According to various news reports, PRD protesters began arriving at 7:30 AM and started setting up tents outside Congress's entrances at about 9:30 AM. Meanwhile, several hundred PFP members arrived on the scene blocking other AMLO supporters from joining the demonstration.

PFP and PRD Clash

4. (U) The violence between protesters and PFP was triggered at approximately 14:30, when PRD protesters tried to prevent the PFP from hauling away three vehicles protesters had parked in front of Congress, blocking an entrance. According to Mexican newspaper El Universal, protesters threw sticks, stones and bottles at the PFP, who responded by firing three rounds of tear gas at approximately 14:50. As the crowd disbursed, hundreds of riot police formed a line between the protesters and the Congress. PRD protesters re-grouped at about 15:30 and briefly set up their encampment on a street further away from Congress, but later abandoned the site retreating toward the Zocalo.

5. (U) A PRD spokesman reported injuries to eight deputies, two senators, and four elected city officials. PRD legislators Dolores Padierna, Juan Jose Garcia Ochoa, and Miguel Elias Moreno Brizuela were among the injured. Pandiera was hit in the face and arms and Moreno Brizuela suffered a blow to the ribs. While El Universal reported that Garcia Ochoa suffered the "severest injuries," CNN reported his injuries as "minor head wounds."

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PFP and PRD Responses After the Clash

6. (U) Shortly after the incident, several PRD members filed criminal complaints at the PRD-controlled city attorney general's office. At a rally that evening, AMLO told his supporters that the events of the day showed the authorities are "taking off their masks and putting aside their talk of supposed legality and respect." He added, "we won't allow ourselves to be provoked."

7. (U) The PFP released a bulletin the same day stating that its forces had followed the standard procedure used when a public assembly fails to disburse as ordered. According to the statement, PFP forces tried to conduct a dialogue with

the protesters, but "given their refusal to withdraw," federal police removed the blockade. Similarly, Public Safety Secretary Eduardo Medina Mora told a news conference the following day, "I don't see that there was any act of repression...I see an operational procedure to break up the blockades." On August 15, authorities installed metal barriers around the entrances to the Congress, to prevent protesters from approaching the site.

Comment

8. (SBU) Although PRD protesters have demonstrated at other federal buildings, including several secretariats (reftels), this appears to be the first time federal law enforcement authorities have directly intervened in a protest, and the first time that force has been used. PFP actions have confirmed earlier comments from embassy contacts that an attempt to blockade the Congress would be a potential "trip-wire" for federal police intervention. We suspect that federal authorities are particularly concerned that the protesters would seek to embarrass President Fox at his September 1 message to Congress -- or even prevent Fox from appearing -- and were eager to prevent them from establishing a tent camp that might serve as a base for such an action. Yesterday's clash also serves as a caution to both sides that whether or not intended, violence is a distinct possibility once public security forces are called upon to intervene in a protest. AMLO supporters, nonetheless, were not fazed enough by the clash to prevent them from blocking entrance to the Spanish embassy the very next day.

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